

Statement by RENGO President Nobuaki Koga on Disaster from the 2011 Tohoku – Pacific Ocean Earthquake and RENGO’s Countermeasures
14 March 2011

An enormously powerful earthquake centered off the Sanriku coast in the Tohoku (North Eastern) region occurred at 2:46 p.m. on 11 March 2011. It was a 9.0-magnitude earthquake, which is the maximum scale ever recorded in Japan, registering the highest level of 7 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale in northern Miyagi Prefecture. The seismic intensity 6 or above was recorded in other prefectures in the Tohoku region and prefectures in the Kanto region, and it shook across a wide area from Hokkaido to western Japan.

Moreover, immediately after the earthquake, a record large scale tsunami reached the Pacific side of the Tohoku and Kanto regions, resulting in enormous damage to coastal areas.

RENGO expresses its deepest condolences to the victims killed by this unexpected disaster, and its heartfelt sympathy to all sufferers from this severe earthquake and the tsunami.

Speedy assistance must be extended to the affected people being forced to live in evacuation centers, most of whose houses have been lost and lifelines have been damaged. We also expect the quickest possible rescue operations to be carried out for many missing people.

Immediately after the earthquake, the government set up a headquarters for emergency disaster response, headed by Prime Minister Naoto Kan. The headquarters has been carrying out measures of rescuing the victims including designating “serious disaster areas” and mobilising a large-scale Self Defense Force into the severe disaster areas.

RENGO appreciates these quick and precise actions taken by the government, and calls for the continuation of prompt and accurate judgment during such period when emergency responses are required.

Furthermore, the accident at a certain nuclear power plant has generated a sense of anxiety among citizens. We demand the government to take safety measures to the fullest extent and to disclose full information to the public. The situation, including the power outage resulting from the shortage of electricity supply in the Kanto region, has been affecting the energy supply. We ask for utmost efforts to secure safety and relief of the people, especially essential utilities and lifelines, so as to avoid disruption of the people’s living and to dispel people’s anxiety.

In addition, we call for the government as well as the ruling and opposition parties to cooperate among themselves from a broader perspective in order to tackle this unprecedented natural disaster, putting a top priority on rescue and restoration measures. We expect their action with a broader view point in order to restore the people’s trust and sense of security towards the politics.

RENGO, on behalf of the Japanese workers, expresses our heartfelt gratitude for the international support and solidarity extended to us for this unprecedented earthquake damage.

RENGO will do utmost efforts not only on the protection of the lives and properties of our members and their families but also on rescue and restoration as a whole, as the social mission of the labour movement.

We will undertake all the necessary actions, including collecting information, through a RENG0 Disaster Relief Task Force set up within the headquarters as well as through cooperation with our affiliates and RENG0 Locals. We will also work with the central government, local governments concerned, and relevant organisations/NPOs so as to tackle this national disaster.

Under this “national crisis,” RENG0, with the spirit of "solidarity and mutual support", is determined to make a united effort in rescue and restoration activities, and calls for unified and committed actions.